

Draft Small Forest Landowner Language

Draft 10.22.2019

The Solutions Table recognizes the critical importance of small forest landowners in maintaining the health and vibrancy of rural communities and in supporting both timber-related jobs and conservation benefits. The Solutions Table recommends that DNR increases awareness of the key role that small forest landowners play in helping reduce land conversion and maintaining the health and vibrancy of rural landscapes and communities by providing timber volume and timber-related jobs and conservation benefits and increase support for small forest landowners to encourage them to actively manage their lands and help them achieve their individual harvest and conservation goals.

Small forest landowners can include landowners with working forest lands and landowners with conservation lands. Small forest landowners with working forest lands are forest land owners who harvest on average less than two million board feet per year. Altogether, these land owners manage 25% (5.7 million acres) of forest land in Washington. In counties entirely within the marbled murrelet's Washington range, small forest landowners manage 1.7 million forested acres compared to DNR's land management in the same counties of 1.2 million forested acres.

The Solutions Table believes that Sstrong, mutually supportive working relationships need to be built among:

- Small forest landowners
- All the agencies that regulate small forest landowners' activities (including, but not only, DNR)
- Non-governmental organizations engaged with public policy on forests and forestry

In addition, specific steps should be taken to expand awareness of the importance of small forest landowners to rural communities, timber-related jobs, and conservation outcomes, improving their "social license" to actively manage their forestlands.

We recommend that DNR work with small forest landowners to better understand their circumstances and develop a clear strategy to effectively support and incentivize them to maintain and actively manage their forest land for timber-harvest and/or conservation benefits depending on their individual goals. To help achieve this DNR should work with small forest landowners to identify land that is currently being actively managed for harvest or conservation, and opportunities to expand active management. For example, improving programs to help small forest landowners coordinate the timing of harvests or even aggregate sales could reduce the harvest costs by spreading them over more lands and encourage more harvesting; improving and expanding programs for purchase of development rights could encourage small forest landowners with appropriate habitat to dedicate their lands to conversation benefits.

To reduce confusion and duplication of effort, we encourage DNR to undertake this work in collaboration with other organizations that are actively working to assist small forest landowners including, but not limited to: Washington State University Extension Forestry Program, Washington State Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program), Washington Farm Forestry Association, and Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative.

The assessment should include consideration of appropriate policy, regulatory, and financial support mechanisms such as: regulatory reform, direct assistance and incentive programs, public awareness and outreach, infrastructure and logistical support (e.g., by making replanting stock available), and safe harbor programs.

The Solutions Table strongly encourages the State Legislature to strengthen the Small Forest Landowner Office's capability to provide technical assistance and education by improveing funding for DNR's small forest landowner programs and for the Family Forest Fish Passage Program that is jointly administered by DNR, WDFW, and Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. The Solutions Table also recommends that DNR works to better connect small forest landowners to currently available assistance programs such as the Forestry Riparian Easement Program, the Family Fish Passage Program, the federal Forest Service Grant, the Farmland Preservation Grant, and others.